Agreement between India and Singapore to Promote Tourist Circuit

3531. SHRI R.P. GOENKA: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that India and Singapore have agreed to co-promote and market both the countries as a tourist circuit;

(b) if so, the details thereof, including results of studies made, if any, on the broad pattern of tourists visiting both India and Singapore and projections of inflow of additional tourists to the two countries;

(c) the details of the strategy drawn for special focus on tourists from any specific country(ies) in the initial stages; and

(d) the details of experience of the existing similar tourist circuit, consisting of Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (d) India and Singapore signed an Agreement on Tourism Cooperation on 24th January, 1994. Besides cooperation in other areas, the Agreement provides for exchange of information on tourism industries and exploring opportunities for cooperation in areas of mutual interest for development of tourism in both the countries. A joint Study Group on Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement between India and Singapore had recommended that areas of cooperation in the tourism sector could be activated for the mutual benefit of both countries.

Decline in Foreign Tourists

†3532. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) the number of foreign tourists visited India in the year 2004-05 and to what extent this number was more or less as compared with that of the year 2003-04;

(b) the foreign currency earned through the visit of foreign tourists into India and steps being taken by Government to attract the foreign tourists to visit India; and

(c) the initiative taken for granting the industry status to the tourism in India alongwith the revenue earning by Government through the service tax in tourism sector?

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) An estimated 35,37,630 foreign tourists visited India during the year 2004-05 compared to 28,78,638 foreign tourists during 2003-04 showing an increase of 22.9% during 2004-05 over the year 2003-04.

(b) The foreign exchange earnings from tourism during the year 2004-05 have been estimated as Rs. 23,469 crores against Rs. 18,058 crores during 2003-04 showing an increase of about 30.0% during 2004-05 over the year 2003-04. A number of steps have been taken by the Government to attract foreign tourists to visit India, inlcuding:—

Development of tourist spots under its various schemes of infrastructure development of tourist circuits and destinations;

Direct approach to the consumers through Electronic and print media through the "Incredible India" Campaign;

Creation of World Class Collaterals;

Centralized Electronic Media Campaign;

Direct co-operative marketing with tour operators and wholesalers overseas;

Greater focus in the emerging markets, particularly in the region of China, North East Asia and South East Asia;

Participation in Trade Fairs & Exhibitions;

Optimizing Editorial PR and Publicity;

Use of Internet and web marketing;

Generating Tourist Publications;

Re-inforcing hospitality programmes including grant of air passages to invite media personnel and tour operators on familiarization tours to India to get first hand knowledge on various tourism products;

Launching of Road Shows in key source markets of Europe;

Focusing on growth of hotel infrastructure particularly budget hotels; and

Enhancing connectivity through augmentation of air capacity and improving road infrastructure to major tourist attractions.

(c) There is no proposal in the Ministry of Tourism to accord industry status to the tourism sector. The data on revenue earned by Government through service tax in tourism sector is not maintained separately by Ministry of Finance (Department of Revenue).

Task Force to promote Health Tourism

3533. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that his Ministry, along with the Ministry of Health or Family Welfare, set up a Task Force to promote health tourism in the country;

(b) if so, whether the Task Force submitted its recommendations to Government; and

(c) what action plan does his Ministry has to promote and publicise health tourism through its India tourism offices located in various parts of the world?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Ministry of Tourism along with Ministry of Family Welfare have set up a Task Force with a view to promoting India as a Health Destination for persons across the world so as to gainfully utilize the health-care expertise and infrastructure available in the country. It has been decided to promote India aggressively as a Health Destination in close coordination and collaboration with the public sector tour operators.

(c) Ministry of Tourism, Government of India has published a brochure and CD-Rom titled "Body, Mind and Soul" giving information on ancient and proven healing techniques like Ayurveda, Yoga, Panchkarma, Rejuvenation, etc. in various States of India. This publicity material on the traditional and natural medicines is being distributed by India tourism Offices in India and overseas to promote Health Tourism.

Potential of Cruise Tourism

3534. SHRI RAMA MUNI REDDY SIRIGIREDDY: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is a great potential for cruise tourism in the country;